

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

## A Weekly Journal

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### "THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN."

By "RITA."

*Author of "Dame Durden," "Gretchen," "Darby and Joan," "Sheba," etc., etc.*

#### BOOK VI.

##### CHAPTER I. THE THRESHOLD OF SORROW.

AFTER that evening, I began to regard the Laird with a speculative curiosity. He had shown himself to me in a novel light; and for the first time since our marriage I found myself studying the candid, honest face and kindly eyes, and wondering whether, after all, he did look upon me as something better than—well, not dog or horse—but farms, and shootings, and tenants' interests. The narrow limits of the yacht were favourable enough for my studies; and as Bella and Robert McKaye were a good deal together, the Laird was reduced to sharing my society, or that of Huel Penryth. The latter, however, had taken a gloomy and absorbed fit upon him of late, and was always reading, or writing, or making sketches of the wild scenes through which we passed.

The weather had changed to gloom and cold. The days were grey and dull, and the wind would moan drearily about the great rocks, and desolate hills, and the dark, roughened waters.

I longed indescribably to return. The nervous horror I had felt of these wild regions increased rather than diminished, and the tales and legends of the sailors, which the girls were always collecting and repeating, filled me with a superstitious dread, for which I could not account.

A brief glimpse of sunshine, and a paler

tint of grey in the leaden skies, induced us one morning to make the excursion to the Spa Cavern. To me it seemed that the fatigue and trouble requisite were ill repaid by the result. When we left it, the sea was rough and stormy again; the sun had disappeared sulkily behind great banks of clouds. We were all damp, and chilled, and tired. Even Bella's infallible good spirits flagged, and her face looked pinched and blue. The little pinnacle scudded along through gathering mists, skirting the rocky coast and its numerous caverns. Here and there we could see the lofty peaks of the Cuchullins piercing the clouds, only to be hidden from sight the next moment by those thick, dense vapours. I cowered down in the small boat, shivering in every limb, despite the thick wraps with which the Laird had covered me.

"Surely," I said, as we neared the yacht, "we've had enough of these regions now; not even the scenery is worth this incessant cold, and damp, and gloom. I should fancy the sun had forgotten the very existence of these islands."

"I wonder what you would say to Stornoway and the Lewis?" said the Laird; "they are cold and stormy, if you like; this is nothing."

I shuddered; spirits and health were alike suffering, and the trivial discomforts, at which we had all made merry at first, had now become sources of misery and depression that I seemed too weak to endure.

"I agree with Athole," said Bella, as we reached the yacht at last, and were rejoicing over the prospect of luncheon, in the shape of hot soup and grilled salmon. "It is very dreary here; I expect the weather has changed for a long time. Had we not better get back to Oban?"

There was a little discussion; but the girls had sided with Bella, and, of course, Mr. M Kaye did the same. It was agreed, therefore, that if the wind favoured us, we should set sail next morning for the more genial coasts we had left.

The decision gave me more content than I had experienced for a long time. I retreated to my cabin after luncheon, on the plea of fatigue, and did not go on deck again until late in the afternoon.

There was a dull, yellow glow in the west; the yacht was heaving and tossing on the roughened waters of the loch, and the sky looked very dark and threatening. One of the sailors was looking out over the wild waste of waters through a spy-glass. His face wore an anxious and perturbed expression.

"What are you looking at, Ferguson?" I asked, approaching him.

He started, and almost dropped the glass.

"It was the Laird, mem; and he'll be out yonder wi' only the lad Davie in that bit cockleshell, and there's a squall coming up west. I know weel it will just catch them round yon point. He was fair out o' his wits to venture."

"Do you mean to say the Laird has gone out to sea?" I asked, anxiously, for it looked too wild and stormy for a small boat, and every moment seemed gaining strength and fury.

"I mean just that. It was all for shooting some kind of bird the lassies wanted, and the Laird took his gun, and just had the boat down, and called wee Davie to him, and was off. I'm feared they'll no' make the yacht to-night."

"But what would they do?" I asked, in sudden alarm. "There's no place where they could land, is there?"

He shook his head.

"There's the caves," he said; "but I'm afraid it is out to sea they'll be carried. I canna make out the boat now—'deed, it was fairly rash o' the Laird."

"Give me the glass," I said, and I raised it to my eyes and searched the grey and foaming plain with anxious scrutiny.

The clouds had closed again over that momentary golden brightness, the west was grey and cold once more, and a dull purple line was spreading ominously along the misty horizon. There was no sign of the boat. The sea birds were wailing and screaming around the wild crags, where already the water was dashing and foaming under the lash of the rising wind.

I dropped the glass and looked anxiously at the seaman.

"You'd best just gang below stairs, mem," he said, abruptly. "The squall will be upon us in the blink o' an e'e, and we'll just ha'e to make all sure and taut on deck here wi'out loss o' time."

"But the boat," I cried, in real alarm. "What will become of it—it is such a little frail thing to stand such a storm!"

Even as I spoke, a hoarse, hissing sound broke over the monotonous stillness—there was a fierce blast—a rush of breaking waters, and the whole force and fury of the tempest came roaring over our heads, till, in the gathering darkness, land and sea were alike shut out from sight.

The yacht trembled and strained at its anchor, as the swell caught and rocked it from side to side. I clung desperately to the shrouds to steady myself, while the rain burst forth in one fierce torrent, deluging the deck and drenching me to the skin.

Some one hurried towards me—I felt a hand on my arm—a voice in my ear.

"You here, Mrs. Campbell? What madness! Let me take you down below."

The voice and hand were those of Huel Penryth.

I clung to him—unnerved by sudden terror.

"The boat!" I gasped. "Oh, why did you let him go? It can never live in a storm like this."

"Oh, nonsense," he said, cheerfully, as he tried to warm my icy hands, and support me over the slippery deck. "It will be safe enough. Campbell is a first-rate seaman, and he would have seen the storm coming, and made for one of the islands—or caves."

But his voice sounded far away and indistinct. The black pall of the surrounding darkness seemed to close thickly and densely round me. My eyes closed—and it seemed as if the roar and spray of the sea had swept over my head, and that I was sinking into unfathomable depths.

How long that unconsciousness lasted I cannot tell. When I recovered it was to see Bella's anxious face bent over me—and to find myself in my own cabin. I felt strangely weak, and the chill and cold of the sea seemed still upon me. The fury of the storm still raged. I could hear the shrill whistle of the wind, the rattle of the shrouds, the hiss of the waves against the sides of the rocking vessel.

For a while I lay passively there, trying to collect my thoughts, wondering whether it was day or night. Then suddenly memory returned; I sprang up and seized Bella's arm.

"Has the boat come back?" I cried, impulsively.

"The boat," she said, soothingly. "No, not yet; but, of course, it is quite safe. Do not distress yourself, the Laird knows the coast so well. He would have been sure to have put in somewhere when he saw the storm coming on."

I sank back on the pillow.

"Not yet?" I echoed, and the presentiment of evil, which had once before oppressed me, came sweeping heavily over my senses again.

"It will never come back," I said, drearily, "never—never; I feel it."

"Nonsense, Athole!" exclaimed Bella. "Don't be getting that idea into your head; you mustn't expect it to return to-night! Probably they'll wait for daylight wherever they put in. Every one says so. The sailors know what a good seaman your husband is. There really is no need to be anxious."

But her words failed utterly to convince me. I listened dumbly, stupidly; but all the time my heart grew heavier beneath its load of fear, all the time reproach and remorse were busy within me.

He might even now be lying cold and still under that wild, fierce sea. And I had let him go to meet his death without a kind word or look, without an effort to win his confidence, or relieve the honest, faithful heart of its burden of suspicion. The thought of death appalled me! Death in the best years of a good and useful manhood—in the midst of that careless jaunt taken for the gratification of a fancy expressed by a pack of foolish girls, and this was the result.

It seemed horrible in its suddenness; and, strange to say, the horror seized me as something too absolutely certain for any argument to refute. Slowly, surely it settled upon my mind. Slowly, surely it haunted the weary, feverish hours of the long night. With the dawn I was in a high fever, brought on by cold, exposure, and the sudden shock and terror of those awful hours.

Long afterwards I heard the story of that dreadful time. I was in a raging fever. They were all frightened, and resolved to run the yacht to the nearest

harbour, where I might be taken ashore, and medical aid procured. The morning broke fine and bright, and the wind was in our favour. One, two, three hours they waited for the missing boat. It never returned; and with every hour the delirium increased, and the fever raged more wildly in my veins. They made for Tobermory again, and here I was put ashore, and the yacht returned to cruise about Loch Scavaig, in hopes of hearing something of the boat or its unfortunate occupants.

But the search and the waiting were futile. No sign, no word ever came. They could only suppose it had been swept out to sea and lost.

Enquiry was made at every point; but no boatman or fisherman had seen aught of it. Nor was there any trace of its wreck, though coast, and cavern, and islands were searched for many a long day.

But of all this I knew nothing. Day followed day, and week followed week. Bella and the two M Kaye girls were the most careful and assiduous of nurses; but, for all that, it was long before the turning-point was reached, and I was pronounced out of danger. Then, sadly, and by slow and wearisome stages, we returned to Corriemoor. Huel Penryth and the M Kayes went to Inverness, but Bella accompanied me.

I found Mrs. Campbell quite broken down and prostrate under the blow that had so suddenly fallen. Donald was her pride, and prop, and stay. All her life and interests had centered in him so long, that without him she seemed to lose strength of mind and body.

Inexpressibly dreary and mournful was the house, and every face seemed to carry something of the shadow of that recent loss. The fact of there being no direct heir was another misfortune, as now the estate would pass to some distant relative. Mrs. Campbell and I had, of course, an income for life; but Corriemoor itself was destined for strangers.

I heard all this in a dumb and passive way. Perhaps, if I had loved the place, it would have been different; but I never had felt any keen or romantic attachment for my married home—nothing of the feeling I entertained for Craig Bank. I made up my mind to return there, and live with Grannie. Mrs. Campbell was going to a widowed sister in Perth, so I felt that I could act with independence.

Three months after that ill-fated yacht-

ing expedition, I was once again in Inverness, receiving Grannie's loving welcome, and almost ready to cheat myself into the belief that those intervening years had been but a dark and troubled dream, and that I was still only Athole Lindsay.

Almost. But the effort was not easy and not successful; for it was surely no girl's face that looked back at me from the little mirror of the familiar room; and no girl's heart beat now in that aching breast of womanhood, which spoke of lessons learnt in pain, endured in silence, and whose fruits had yet to be gathered in.

#### CHAPTER II. ALWAYS ALONE.

"WHEN are you going to be married, Bella?" I asked one morning, as she and I were sitting in the little drawing-room at Craig Bank.

"Not till after Christmas," she said. "You see the McKays have a good deal of sight-seeing to get through yet, and Robert does not want to go back in the height of the Australian summer."

"I wonder how long you will remain out there?" I said, with a sigh. "I shall miss you, terribly!"

"Do you know what I've been thinking?" she said, suddenly, as she let the work on which her busy fingers had been engaged fall idly on her lap. "I don't see why you shouldn't come out with us! There's nothing to keep you here, and your health is quite broken down. You are as white as a ghost and as thin as a lath. It makes my heart ache to see you. I was asking Dr. Macgregor about you, yesterday, and he told me that you ought not to spend a winter here—the thing to set you up would be a sea voyage."

I shivered.

"Oh, no," I cried. "If you only knew how I hate the very sight and sound of the sea."

"That is because you are so weak and unnerved," said Bella, soothingly. "I'm sure I don't wonder at it. But, dearie," she went on, putting her kind arm round me and drawing me close to her side, "you must try and get over this—this morbid feeling. I know what it is; you are almost reproaching yourself; you think——"

"I will tell you what I think," I said, passionately. "I think, Bella, that I was selfish, and blind, and inconsiderate; that I dealt pain to that good, kindly heart by a thousand words, and looks, and ways;

that he knew, though he kept silence, why I had always been so cold and indifferent; that he wanted me to be straightforward, and have confidence in him, and then he would have helped me. But I never understood that till too late; and then came that cruel death, and I can never tell him now, or beg him to forgive me. Oh, to think of it wrings my heart! The long, long, never-ending silence; and he was so good! He never reproached me, and I—I was always brooding and mourning over my own selfish sorrows. I never even thought he noticed, or—or cared. But he did, Bella. Perhaps, too, in his own quiet way he suffered to the full as much as I did."

"I am quite sure of that," she said.

I looked up hastily, dashing the tears of weakness and helplessness from my eyes.

"You knew?" I said. "Well, no doubt it was apparent enough to every one but myself."

"It was very unfortunate," she said, as she smoothed the thick, disordered hair from my brow, and tried to school its rebellion under my widow's cap. "If Douglas Hay had not been with us, I often think we should have got on better. The Laird never liked him; and I'm sure—I'm more than sure, he saw that he cared for you."

I was silent. I shared her conviction. I had been sure of it also from that night when Donald and I had been so near confidence—yet, not near enough to seize the opportunity.

"But of what use to fret now?" Bella resumed. "How often you have said that life is full of mistakes, and we make our own sufferings by our own follies!"

"That is true," I said, mournfully. "Bella, I am not very old yet; but it seems to me, when I look back, that I have lived a lifetime of misery and self-reproach. Perfect confidence is the keystone of married peace, without it there will always be coldness, estrangement, and mistrust. I married Donald Campbell with a secret in my heart; and only now, when it is too late, I seem to recognise that I might have trusted him to the full, and that he would have been wise enough to understand and not condemn, and loving enough to pardon."

"I am glad," said Bella, "you do him justice, at last. But, dear Athole, do not let this morbid regret spoil your future. You are so young still, you may have a



long and happy life before you; if—*if* Douglas loves you still—and I am more than sure he does—what is to prevent your marrying him now?"

The blood flew in a sudden flash of shame to my face. "Oh, hush," I cried, entreatingly. "How can I make you understand? I know Douglas loves me—I know he never ceased to care, even through those silent years that divided us. But if I went to him, if I listened now, it would always seem as if that dead man's voice sounded in my ears with endless reproach; as if his face looked back at me as—as I have seen it look in a hundred delirious fancies, when the waves tossed it up to the grey skies, as if in sport and derision. He thought of me when he was drowning in that wild sea, thought of me, called for me—I know it so well—and in all the years to come I feel as if I could never shut out that memory, or silence that voice."

"But, my dear, this is only a morbid fancy, as I have said before; born of weakness, and sorrow, and the long strain you have suffered on heart and nerves."

I shook my head.

"You don't understand me, Bella. Indeed, I often think I do not understand myself. There is a wide difference between our two natures, and undoubtedly yours is the happier. Sometimes I wonder what makes the difference between us. I suppose it is circumstances. Had I been in your place— But, there, what folly to talk like that! We are as we are. No one asks us if we desire to be born; no one seems to care whether our surroundings are suitable, or not, to our welfare. Helplessly and without choice we are flung into a groove of life, be it a dungeon, or a torture-chamber, or a palace of delight, and luxury, and love. What can we do? Nothing—nothing. Nothing; though we beat chained hands against our prison bars, or shriek out in agony of soul in the torture-chamber, or rebel discontentedly amidst the flowers, and scents, and luxuries of our palace chamber, we shall not alter them nor change them. For fate binds us by a thousand threads, frail to all seeming, but strong, when united, as iron bands are strong. You are saying to yourself now that I am free once more—free to dream my dream of love, free to look forward to the happiness which once seemed so near, and so beautiful. But I know better, Bella; I am not free, and what I fancied was happiness proved only

a myth. There is no reality in the dream of my youth, nor is it able to content me any longer. I want something deeper, and stronger, and more satisfying. My love for Douglas is not a girl's love that accepts without questioning. It is a woman's—deep, searching, far-reaching, passionately jealous, and exacting. It is a love he could not understand, and could not satisfy; and—and I could not bear to test it again and know I must endure another failure. So, though you may think me free, Bella, I, in my heart, know I am not, and I will not run the risk of another marriage."

Bella looked at me with puzzled eyes.

"I confess," she said, "I am a long way from understanding you. You were always a fantastical wee body; but what pleasure it can give you to deny yourself what you once craved—and all for the sake of 'ideas'—I cannot imagine. It is as if you lived life for the sake of dreams, and when you wake up imagine that they are more real than the realities."

"Perhaps they are," I said, "to me. Oh, Bella, life is a terrible thing when we think of it. Sometimes I have thought that I shall go mad with all the doubts, and fears, and terrors of it; and no one—nothing gives me rest! And I look out on it all sometimes and wonder why we endure, and why we bear, goaded, like dumb beasts, by a taskmaster we cannot see—we cannot ever reach. Oh, it is no use looking shocked! I must speak. If you only knew how I suffered in all that terrible time of fever! How, in those long, long hours, one thought after another would chase itself through my brain, and all the hateful cruelty and horror of life, and the hypocrisy, and folly, and sin that loads it, and are perpetually seeking and securing fresh victims, would live out for me their histories, past and present! I wonder I did not go mad——"

Sobs burst from me, tearing my breast with suffocating pain. Bella, scared and white, in vain endeavoured to quiet me. How could I explain; how could I make her or any one else understand through what a phase of feeling I had lived and struggled for many and many a weary month?

The hopelessness of it perhaps calmed me more than her soothing words—the words with which one pacifies a grieved and sorrowful child.

Alas! is it not one of the saddest and cruellest of life's many cruelties that our

deepest thoughts meet no answering comprehension, our deepest cry finds never an echo? We must suffer alone—always, always alone. Whatever we think, whatever we doubt, whatever we feel, our own nearest and dearest seem the last to understand us, the last to follow us down to those depths from whence we call for aid, or sympathy.

We are foolish, they say, or wicked, or morbid. Something—anything but what is right, and safe, and rational; and so we take our sorrows and our questionings into silence once again, and weep, and break our hearts, or not, according as our strength may be. But we are alone, always, always alone!

"And now," I said to Bella, after that long pause of silence, "you see why I cannot go to Australia. It would look—oh, you must see how strange it would look! Huel Penryth and—he and he are going out in the same vessel as the M'Kayses. How could I go also? It is impossible. Even if it were really necessary, I could not do it; but I am sure it is not. I am well enough."

She looked at me more sadly as she resumed her work.

"You may be well," she said, "but you certainly don't look so. However, I know of old how determined you are when you have made up your mind. Perhaps," she added, with the nearest approach to sarcasm of which she was capable, "you have argued yourself into a belief that there is something meritorious in killing yourself by inches, as you certainly are doing."

"No, Bella," I said, with a faint smile; "I have no particular desire to do that."

"It's just sheer perversity," she added, crossly. "I shall set Kenneth on to argue with you; he always succeeds in making people do what he wishes."

"Kenneth!" I exclaimed. "Is he home? I thought he was in Edinburgh."

"We expect him to-night," she said. "I suppose you'll not be forbidding him to come and see you, my wee leddy?"

"No; I shall be very glad to see him again," I answered. "It is a long time since we met. He never would come to Corriemoor."

"Perhaps," said Bella, dryly, "he had reasons. Kenneth is very stiff in the matter of opinions, and once he makes up his mind it's no easy work to alter it. I'm not sorry Douglas Hay is away in Corn-

wall; they never agreed; and I'm more than sure that Kenneth would not have cared to see him hanging about here."

"I really do not see why it should matter to Kenneth," I said, with some indignation.

"Don't you?" said Bella, coolly. "That's because you keep your eyes very wilfully closed, little coz; but there's no need to say more; Kenneth can bide his time, and I've no doubt he will."

I was silent for a moment.

Her words distressed and displeased me beyond measure; but I knew she could not understand why they did so, any more than she could follow out the train of reasoning which to her seemed only morbid and gloomy.

For I had spoken but the simple, honest truth, when I had said I would not accept Douglas Hay's love were he again to proffer it. Yet I could not explain what had so altered and revolutionised my feelings. Only love seemed dead within me—dead with the kindly heart that I had never valued, and which for sake of whim of mine had found death in those wild Western seas.

How small, and poor, and insignificant a thing my own life looked beside that honest, unselfish, useful one of the Laird of Corriemoor! That whole trip had been planned and carried out for my pleasure; and now, what was the result? He had gone beyond the reach of my cry for forgiveness, my penitence, and remorse. Was it possible then that I should step to happiness over his dead body, that I should stretch out my hand to accept love and tenderness, and cheat myself into the belief that I was free to do so? I could not. Conscience, heart, mind, all seemed to rebel against such an action; and yet—the time was not so far removed when I had dreamed it possible—when I had acknowledged that love still lived and burned in my aching heart, and that I could suffer still.

But now? Well, now I only knew that ice itself could not have been more cold than were my thoughts of Douglas Hay. All the fevered longings, the passionate desires, the dreams of those dead days, had perished utterly; and that at the very time when one would have expected them to revive and live, nourished by fresh hopes, strengthened by new promises, a vision as glad and glorious as when my youth had gazed upon it through happy tears of trust and joy.

My youth—but that was far away—and

so was the love that it had believed in ; and I knew, so well, so well, that if I took back that love, and tried to content myself with it, and to cheat my mind into accepting it, I should only wake to the knowledge of another failure. I shuddered as I thought of the disenchantment and disillusion of marriage. I was no longer a girl, to whom dreams and ideals meant all, and I felt that I dared not risk a second venture, dared not trust the light nature, swayed by passionate impulse, wavering ever in the balance, the nature I had clothed in virtues of my own imagining, but now recognised as being utterly unable to give me what I desired.

If I had married him in the first instance I might never have awakened ; I might have been blindly satisfied to my life's end. After all, he loved me ; and what better thing can one desire than love in this hard and unpitiful world ? Yet now I knew that love alone would never satisfy me ; and I could not tell him why. It would only hurt his pride. It could not alter his nature.

If I said that I had set myself to analyse this madness for sake of which we had both suffered, and then gave him the result of such analysis, would that convince him ?

Could I say : "I love you ; but I know that if I married you I should be desperately unhappy ; that your love would not answer to my soul ; your nature could not come into touch with that higher part of mine which is ever seeking, asking, desiring——"

If I said that the knowledge of this feeling came to me suddenly without desire of mine, and took possession of my heart, and showed me that that heart had ceased to love him with the old, blind, adoring worship—what would he say ; how much would he understand ?

A man's passion is so stormy and impetuous a thing—while it lasts ; sweeping away obstacles and impediments, bent only on working its own will in its own way.

"Give me this day—this hour," it says. "Let the future take its chance !" and for sake of that day and that hour one sees one's whole life wrecked.

I would have seized that day once, and with blind eyes and beating heart have taken its exceeding rapture as a divine gift, believing in a continuance that now I knew had no existence. Once—but that was surely long ago—a lifetime ago.

My eyes fell on my hands clasped

together, on that black mourning robe, which, after all, was less a mockery than I should once have deemed it !

It had the sombre hues my own life would wear, the dull and cheerless tint of all the colourless days to come. How thin and white my hands looked, resting there ; how loosely the gold circlet fitted my finger now.

The sight and touch of it recalled my wandering thoughts. A wave of sorrowful memories swept over my heart.

"I have spoilt one life," I said to myself, as I touched that small, gold symbol of so many regrets, such wasted hours, such bitter longings. "But I will never willingly spoil another. He will misjudge me. He will think perhaps I am acting out of vanity, folly, revenge ; but I must accept that. After all, will it matter so very much ? My life is not of so great a value—and it must learn patience, and endurance, even as it has learnt suffering."

## THE ART TREASURES OF THE CITY OF LONDON.

### THIRD PART.

#### THE PLATE OF THE LIVERY COMPANIES.

AT all times a considerable portion of the wealth of any of the guilds founded in the Middle Ages, has consisted in the possession of those vessels of gold and silver which are, in the present day, classed under the name of plate. Nor are the Livery Companies in any way deficient in this particular ; although, under the levies and imposts made from time to time by various monarchs, a very large amount has disappeared, either into the melting-pot, or by way of sale.

The inventories, which most of the Companies possess, give evidence of the enormous quantity of this plate, of which what is now in existence can only be a small part. Yet, even now, any one who has been permitted to see the collections of the different Companies, must be struck with the great value and interest of what remains.

Not only the twelve great Companies, but also many of the minor ones, possess their store of loving-cups, standing-salts, and salvers, of the value of which some idea may be formed when it is remembered that a silver standing-salt was recently sold at Christie's for the large sum of three hundred and fifty pounds.

It should first of all be stated that there is very little gold plate to be found anywhere; that which is generally described as gold is silver-gilt. The more precious metal is too heavy for use.

The only gold piece in the possession of the Livery Companies is an ink-stand, made in the early part of the present century, which belongs to the Goldsmiths.

It is popularly supposed that there is a service of gold in the possession of Her Majesty, but Cripps makes no mention of it in his "Gold and Silver Plate," whereas he specially describes three salvers of gold belonging to Her Majesty. It may therefore be assumed that this service is silver-gilt.

At an Exhibition of Plate held in the South Kensington Museum in 1862 there were only five specimens of gold plate exhibited. These included a pair of massive ice-pails, weighing three hundred and sixty-five ounces, given by Queen Anne to the Duke of Marlborough.

It will perhaps be more interesting in describing this plate to refer to it in historical sequence, as it will then be possible to notice the characteristics of each period, and to point out differences of artistic merit. For, of course, amongst much that is very beautiful, there is also a great deal in which all sense of fitness to purpose and proper treatment of material appear to have been forgotten.

The earliest known plate that was manufactured in England, was produced in the monastic houses; but of any that existed before the twelfth century, nothing but the record remains.

In the South Kensington Museum there is exhibited what is known as the Gloucester Candlestick, which was made about the year 1110, and, as a Latin inscription on it records, was given by the Abbot Peter to the Abbey Church at Gloucester. It is of a very elaborate character, and is at least three hundred years earlier than any known domestic plate, although there are pieces of ecclesiastical plate which are nearly as early. In fact, this latter kind preceded by many years the production of domestic plate, of which no mention is made till the Edwardian period.

Amongst the earliest articles in domestic use that are noticed in such records, are mazers. The name is of doubtful origin, but is generally supposed to be derived from the German word for the maple wood, of which the mazer was made. It consisted of a shallow bowl of wood, shaped

like a deep saucer, with a high rim of silver-gilt, and generally with a raised boss of the same material in the bottom of the bowl.

In 1253 a Bishop of Chichester bequeathed his great cup of mazer; and Edward the First, in 1296, had a mazer with cover, foot, and boss of silver. Reference to them is made as late as the time of Spenser, who, in his "Faerie Queen," speaks of "a might mazer bowl of wine." They were presumably used for occasional draughts, being balanced on the tips of the fingers, and then filled, and emptied at one draught. Thus they were the opposite of the other early form of cup, the hanap, which was a standing cup with a deep bowl on a high stem, and always covered, a custom which arose from the fear of poison being added to the drink whilst standing. It was part of the office of the sewer or taster to assay or make trial of all cups, to certify that they had not been tampered with.

There are only three mazers in the collections of the Livery Companies; two belonging to the Ironmongers, dating from about 1450; and one larger one, belonging to the Armourers, dating from 1579. Of the first two, one, which is more elaborate than the other, has a highly ornamented rim of silver gilt, with an inscription, in Gothic letters, "Ave Maria gratia, plena, Dominus Tecum, benedicta tu in mulieribus; et benedictus fructus ventris tui." The arms of the Company are enamelled on a boss in the bottom of the cup. The second mazer is much like this one, but without any inscription.

Of fifteenth century plate, there is very little belonging to the Livery Companies, nor is much to be found anywhere; but there are two fine cups which date from quite the end of the century. One of these, the Leigh Cup, 1490, belonging to the Mercers' Company, is a very beautiful specimen of silver gilt work, ornamented with a lattice of cables forming a series of panels filled with maidens' heads and flagons alternately. The foot is of open coronet-work, supported on three flagons; the cover, which is enamelled with the arms of the City and Mercers' Company, is surmounted by a figure of the maiden and the unicorn. Round the middle of the cover and of the cup on a field of the blue enamel, is inscribed:

To elect the Master of the Mercerie hither am I  
sent,  
And by Sir Thomas Leigh for the same intent.



This cup was exhibited at the Tudor Exhibition in 1890; and a plated one is in the South Kensington Museum, where are also to be seen copies of many of the finest pieces of English antique plate, including the Ironmongers' mazer above mentioned.

The date of the second cup is not known with certainty; but it may safely, from its form, be attributed to the end of this century—that is, so far as can be judged from an engraving; for, as in the case of pictures, the Armourers' Company was the only one which would not allow its plate to be seen. This cup of theirs is known as the Richmond Cup; and though in outline and size much like the Mercers' Cup, it is very different in design; the body and cover are very boldly fluted, and a rich band of ornament runs round the cover. It agrees very much in style with the covered hour-glass salt-cellar which belongs to New College, Oxford, of which the date is 1493. Like the Leigh Cup, it bears an inscription on the cover: "✠ Pra : for : John : Richmund : Ientylman : cetisn : and : armerar : of : London : and : Eme : and : Iesabell : his : wyves : " this is repeated with variations on the bowl.

One of the most beautiful pieces of plate of the sixteenth century, or of any age, is the cup presented to the Goldsmiths' Company by Sir Martin Bowes, who was Lord Mayor in 1551. This cup, out of which Queen Elizabeth drank at her coronation, is about twelve inches high, of silver-gilt, and of much the same character as the Leigh Cup, but more elaborate in treatment—the stem, instead of being solid, is of open work, and encloses three crystals, which have a very beautiful effect. The bowl itself is not so large in diameter as that of the Leigh Cup, and is of more graceful proportion. It is quite as highly decorated. There is no mention of this cup in "Cripps's Corporation and College Plate," nor is there a copy of it at South Kensington; but it is undoubtedly the most beautiful cup to be seen in the City.

Amongst early pieces of plate are the standing salt-cellar which were placed on the table to mark the division of the members of the Court from the Livery. These articles are well known, on account of many references to them in historical literature. Like the hanap-cups, they generally had covers; but in some cases were only covered with a napkin, the top

having horns, or, as they were called, volute guards, to keep the napkin from touching the salt. A reference occurs in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," where Launce says, "The cover of the salt hides the salt"; and the "Boke of Kervinge," an amusing description of mediæval etiquette of the table published in 1516 by Wynkyn de Worde says: "Loke that your salte-seller lydde touch not the salte."

The earliest of these salt-cellar are of what is known as the hour-glass shape; there are two of silver parcel gilt in the possession of the Ironmongers' Company, and are dated 1518 and 1522. They are formed with six large flutes or lobes engraved with conventional ornament, and stand about three and a half inches high. They have no covers.

About the same period are the curious cups of which the bowl is formed of rather more than half a cocoa-nut, the stem being of twisted and ribbed silver, and being held to the bowl by bands of open strap and coronet work. The Vintners possess one in a very good state of preservation, dated 1818, and the Ironmongers and Saddlers have each one.

It is generally possible to tell the exact date of plate because of the Hall mark; this mark is stamped on the plate after the assay has been made by the Goldsmiths' Company, who have by charter, since the reign of Edward the Third, the power of making the assay—that is, the trial as to quality—of all plate produced in London. The hall-mark consists of a leopard's head—the crest of the Company—a lion passant, a letter representing the date, and the maker's mark. The date letter differs every year; only twenty letters of the alphabet are employed, consequently every twenty years the character of the letters, or the form of the device enclosing them, is altered. Certain alterations have occurred at various times in the other marks, a complete list of which will be found in "Old Gold and Silver Plate," by W. J. Cripps.

This marking commenced in 1478, but of plate hall-marked prior to 1500 there are only some nine pieces known to be in existence. There were offices of assay in former times at York, Norwich, Chester, and Bristol, each of which places had a different mark. In the present day plate can be stamped at Sheffield, Birmingham, and many other places.

A very fine sixteenth century cup is the one presented by Henry the Eighth

to the Barber Surgeons, 1523. It is not very large, standing only some seven or eight inches high, and in shape is rather like a mazer on a stem. It is, like the majority of loving cups, of silver-gilt; the band is delicately engraved with leaf work, and Tudor badges, with four lions' heads, from each of which hangs a bell which tradition requires the person drinking to ring. This tradition is referred to in Pepys' Diary, twenty-seventh of February, 1663, as follows: "Among the observables at Chirurgeons' Hall, we drunk the King's health out of a gilt cup, given by King Henry the Eighth to the Company, with bells hanging at it, which every man is to ring by shaking after he hath drunk up the whole cup." The cover is beautifully chased, and is surmounted with a lion and a greyhound supporting the Royal Arms. This cup was exhibited at the Tudor Exhibition, and a copy of it is to be found in the South Kensington Museum. It has passed through many vicissitudes; it was once sold, but in 1649, Edward Arria, a master of the Company, bought it back and presented it to them. A cup somewhat similar in shape, and of the same period, though more elaborate in design, which is in the possession of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and known as the Founders' Cup, is esteemed one of the finest pieces of plate at South Kensington. The Bowes Cup, perhaps better known as Queen Elizabeth's Coronation Cup, already described as belonging to the Goldsmiths' Company, is possibly finer; it is, however, seldom or never exhibited outside the Hall of the Company, and consequently is not mentioned in contemporary works on plate.

A curious ornament, known as the Wine Tun and Wagon, belongs to the Mercers' Company. It is of silver-gilt, beautifully engraved and enamelled, and is generally supposed to be of German manufacture. The copy which is at South Kensington describes it as of English make. There is no date-mark, but it is ascribed to the first half of the sixteenth century. Its character and design are, however, decidedly German. It appears to be merely a table ornament.

In addition to the Richmond Cup, the Armourers and Braziers possess some fine plate of this; but it is impossible to tell, without examination, whether it is of the same value as that which has been described. In the illustrated catalogue of

works of Art exhibited in 1861 at Ironmongers' Hall, at which exhibition the Armourers exhibited their plate, there are references, some of which are illustrated, to most of the cups. The Richmond Cup has been already described. The large mazer, eleven and a half inches in diameter, dates from 1579. The wooden bowl may possibly be older, as mazers had almost gone out of fashion by this time. It is lined inside with silver, the rim of which lining is turned over. On the inside is an engraved figure of Saint George and the Dragon; on a scroll issuing from the mouth of the saint is inscribed, "Put on the whole armour of God." There are other inscriptions, of which one on the rim runs: "Everard Frere gave this mazer w. silver w. was garnished ano. 1579 for ye poor. Roger Tindel, Mr; R. Lokson, I. Pasfild, Wardens. Feare God and Honor the King." The Chapman Cup, dated 1580, is a parcel gilt cup, different in shape to any preceding cups, being rather of the vase or wine-cooler shape, and decidedly Elizabethan in ornamentation. The stem is partly open with scrolls. It stands fourteen inches high. The Company also possesses an owl-pot, 1537; the Bish Cup, 1582; the Doxie Cup, 1585; a cocoa-nut cup, 1598; and an egg-shaped cup, 1598, of which last there is a replica dated 1608. No other Company possesses such an array of sixteenth century cups.

In Timbs's "Curiosities of London," this Company is also said to possess six dozen Apostle spoons; but this must be a fiction, as there are only two complete sets of thirteen known to be in existence. The collection is possibly one of ordinary spoons, and, as such, would be of great interest, for spoons were almost the earliest household implements known. The Goldsmiths and the Barbers have some antique spoons.

Of the two sets of Apostle spoons referred to, one is in the possession of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Four of this set, dated 1566-67, were exhibited at the Tudor Exhibition. The other set, dated 1626, are all by one maker, and belong to the Goldsmiths' Company, to whom they were presented by Major Lambert. In the Ironmongers' Catalogue mentioned above there is reference to an exhibit of twelve Apostle spoons belonging to the Rev. Samuel Lysons, which is called a complete set.

These spoons came into fashion about

the commencement of the sixteenth century. It seems to have been an old custom for sponsors at christenings to give one or more such spoons—the wealthy giving a complete set, the less well-to-do giving according to their means—to the child for whom they answered. If only one was given, the spoon would bear the figure either of the Saint in honour of whom the child was called, or of the patron Saint of the donor. The thirteenth figure completing the set was that of the Saviour, the spoon bearing such a figure being the most rare. The custom was on the wane in the middle of the seventeenth century, after which period these spoons were no longer made.

Along with the Goldsmiths' set Major Lambert also presented the Company with a fine collection of old cups, chalices, and ordinary spoons, all of which have very wisely been placed in a glass-case for exhibition, instead of being exposed to continual use. The cups are mostly plain in design, such as would have been intended for ordinary domestic service.

Belonging to the sixteenth century is also the Goldsmiths' drum salt, ascribed to Cellini. It is of silver gilt, with a large amount of blue enamelling round the drum.

A fine old Delft jug, with Elizabethan silver mountings, dated 1562, belongs to the Vintners' Company. There are only two rose-water dishes of this century amongst the Livery plate. They belong to the Merchant Taylors; one, the Offley Salver, date 1590, is nearly plain, with a centre of chased ornaments, and is parcel gilt. The second one, dated 1597, known as the Maye Salver, is much more ornate, being chased and repoussé in high relief with sea monsters and foliage. This is also parcel gilt, which, it may be better to explain, means partly gilt, a method of colouring plate which is very effective.

Undoubtedly there was once in existence a large quantity of plate of this period; but much of it was melted down in obedience to Royal impositions, the better pieces being sold into foreign countries. Such as remains is very beautiful, a result not to be wondered at, when it is known that it was executed from the designs of such masters as Holbein.

Before leaving this period, mention must be made of the curious garlands with which the masters of certain Companies were crowned at their inauguration—a custom which is, in some cases, still kept up. These

garlands are formed of devices of silver, fastened on to a band or cap of velvet. The master's garland of the Carpenters' Company dates from 1561, and is made up of the master's initials, J. T.—for John Tryll—the arms, and the date. The other Companies possessing these garlands, which are all composed of like devices, are the Ironmongers, Leathersellers, and Barbers.

The Liveries possess a great deal of plate of the succeeding century; in fact the greater part of what may be called their antique plate belongs to this period, particularly to the latter part, after the Civil War.

The few cups that have been described as belonging to the last century, are of fine design, and beautiful specimens of the silversmith's craft; but this excellence is not always retained in the next period. There appears to have been an importation of German work about this time, for the splendid cup which Old Parr presented to the Broderers' Company, in 1606, is of Nuremberg manufacture. German silversmiths' work, much of which was very beautiful, was, at this period, very florid in design, with a tendency to naturalistic treatment in the ornament. This feeling seems to have influenced English workers, for the two cups belonging, one to the Broderers, known as the Harrison Cup, dated 1606, and the other the Leycroft Cup, 1608, belonging to the Armourers, are both very ugly in shape. The stem consists in each case of the trunk of a tree, and the bowl is a very ugly pear shape, with a sort of squeeze in the middle; the whole thing looking like a caricature of the German hanap-cups of the sixteenth century. In the Leycroft Cup, however, the chased and repoussé ornament is still very conventional. The Goldsmiths have a fine cup, with cover, of this period. It is known as the Hanbury Cup, 1609, and is the type on which the earlier cups of the Restoration are founded. The bowl and cover are covered with ornament in relief, the stem is baluster shape, and the cover and foot are rather flat in treatment.

The English tradition is well kept up by four beautiful cups belonging to the Carpenters' Company; these cups, which stand about fifteen inches high, are of silver-gilt, richly repoussé, and chased with conventional foliage and strap-work. In shape they differ from any of the preceding cups, the bowl is deep, and bell-shaped, the stem is of open work; the bowl being

supported by three scrolls, which are in the best example shaped in female figures. On each cover is a high, open-work finial of obelisk shape. The largest of them is inscribed :

"John Reeve being Mr ye second tyme made one for ye use of ye Mr Wardens & Coi-altye of ye mistery of Freemen of ye Carpentry of ye Cittye of London for ever w<sup>th</sup>out charging ye Coi-altye then being, 1611." The other three, known as the Wardens' Cups, were presented by John Ansell 1611, Thomas Edmones 1612, and Anthony Jarman 1628, and bear inscriptions to that effect. The Master's Cup was taken as the model, but in each one a slight difference is made. This form of cup was taken as the model for the Jubilee Cup presented in 1887 to the Goldsmiths' Company by Major Lambert. The most remarkable thing about this cup is that wherever a plain surface appears it is engraved with a short description of some event of Her Majesty's reign, and some idea may be formed of the amount of engraving on the cup from the fact that a list of these events fills a closely printed scroll, about four yards long, which is enclosed inside the bowl of the cup.

It would be a hopeless task to attempt to describe all the cups belonging to the Goldsmiths' Company, whose collection of plate is so wonderful in extent and value, that an ordinary sightseer is simply dumbfounded. The Armourers' Company possesses six small wine cups, dated 1606, in shape much the same as the shallow champagne glasses of modern days.

The Camden Cup belonging to the Painter-stainers' Company, the gift, in 1623, of Camden the Historian, is one of the earliest of the graceful cups which become frequent towards the latter part of the century. The bowls are deep and square, the stem of baluster shape, and the foot plainly moulded; in later times the bowl is generally plain, but in this early example is decorated with deep repoussé acanthus leaves. A cup somewhat similar in shape, though not so large, belongs to the Haberdashers' Company; it is dated 1623, and the bowl is ornamented in relief with three scenes from the book of Tobit. Another beautiful cup belonging to this Company, dates from 1637. It has a bowl like the Camden Cup, and a stem of open work like those of the Carpenters' Cups. There are copies of the Haber-

dashers' Cups in the South Kensington Museum.

The Skinners' Company possesses some good cups of the period just prior to the Civil War. They are all of the same shape and pattern as these just described, but without the repoussé work; and all have baluster stems. The Powell Cup, 1637, has the stem ornamented with acanthus leaves; and on the pair of loving-cups—which were "the gifte of Edward Bolle, Esq., in 1642"—the balusters are very enlarged, so that the centre of the stem somewhat resembles the knop of an ornamental chalice.

The curious set known as the Cokayne loving-cups are assigned in the Company's account to the year 1610, although they were not presented to the Company till 1689. There are five of them, made in the shape of a cock, of which the head removes, and the body forms the cup. However interesting these cups may be as curios, and however well they may be executed, it cannot for a moment be pretended that they are beautiful works of Art. A cup should look like a cup, and not like a representation of a bird; there should be a sense of fitness in all things, a remark specially applicable to such articles as these. In the finest articles of plate it is this fitness for the purpose and the proper subservience of the decorative treatment which makes them valuable. The Peahen Cup of the same Company, dated 1642, is another curiosity, which, if it were only a silver statuette of a peahen and her chicks, would be a fine work of Art, but the utilisation of it as a loving-cup reduces it to an absurdity. The same remark applies to the Leopard Snuff-box. The Leopard is the crest of the Company; and the reproduction of it, as a small silver statuette, is very appropriate, so long as it is merely an ornament, but when it is found that the animal has a lid in its back, and is used to contain snuff, all artistic propriety is outraged. This snuff-box, however, dates from 1680, when the good taste, which was displayed before the Civil War, had become wrecked by the depravity of the Restoration. Possibly, also, it might be found that these Cokayne cups belong to the later period, as there seems to be some doubt as to their actual date.

With the beginning of the century another form of drinking-cup appears; the place of the mazer is taken by the beaker. The Mercers' Company possesses



three very good ones, dated 1604. They are of silver-gilt, perfectly plain, except for a moulded band and foot; tapering downwards in shape, and engraved with the Company's arms. Another beaker, of later date, 1638, belongs to the Vintners' Company. It is rather taller, and more tapering than those just referred to, of plain silver, and decorated with acanthus leaves springing from above the foot. This Company has also a cup of the same date, inscribed, "The gift of Anthony Palle to His Majestie's wine porters, 1638."

There are some drum salt-cellar belonging to this period. The Armourers possess one, 1604, with an inscription, "Make all sure"; and the Haberdashers another, 1615, known as the Hammersley Salt, the drum being decorated with a relief of a pastoral scene.

Another form of salt-cellar is known as the Pillar Salt, and of this kind the Goldsmiths possess a beautiful example. It is in the shape of a temple, with columns supporting the plateau for salt; in the centre, from the stem, is a small figure of Neptune, enclosed in crystal. An objection might possibly be taken to the design, it being a miniature representation of a temple, and, as such, showing a want of fitness for its purpose. It is not, however, a direct copy of any building, but a conventional treatment of architectural forms, the conventionality being more marked by the central pedestal of crystal.

The Vintners' Company have also a very fine one, as to the date of which authorities disagree. The ornamental work is Elizabethan in character, and points rather to the commencement of the century. This salt-cellar is a square one, with a cover, the whole standing twelve inches high and four and a half inches square; on the sides are four female figures, in high relief, representing Justice, Fortitude, Temperance, and Charity, and the cover is surmounted by another female figure, the whole being of most delicate execution.

The Clothworkers possess a very fine silver—"Ex dono, J. Barnett, 1605"—a marvellous piece of repoussé work. This and the Maye Salver, belonging to the Merchant Taylors, may be considered the finest in the City. There are copies of both in the South Kensington Museum. The majority of the salvers—or, rather, rose-water dishes—are very plain; of this kind the Skinners have a very good one, dated 1625.

Thus, of the plate which was made

before the Civil War, in 1642, enough has escaped destruction to show that it was very beautiful in character, particularly that which belongs to the Tudor period. With a few exceptions it never violates good taste, and is more remarkable for its artistic qualities than for mere vulgar weight of metal.

During the Civil War very little plate was made, and much more disappeared; but with the Restoration the manufacture was revived, and the collections of the Livery Companies were enriched by the addition of many beautiful pieces, which will be described in another article.

## PHŒBE.

### IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

THE next day, as soon as I was free of work in the afternoon, I went to see how young Arty Lister's leg was getting on. As I walked up the hill towards the heath and then along the grass road from the heath gate to Lister's cottage, there was a kind of eager trembling all over me, such as I had never felt before. As to whistling—like I whistled going to see Grace Ellis—I could as soon have fled. I was wondering all the time if Phœbe would be in, and, if she was, if she would speak civilly to me than she had done the night before. Of the bad luck her father had promised me I tried not to think; but it was not so easy to drive his words out of my head after what had happened. By the time I had got to the tumble-down wicket my heart was beating faster than I'd ever known it beat, even when I'd been in the thick of the fray with poachers.

The cottage door stood open, and I thought I heard a footstep inside; but I knocked and waited, and knocked again. No answer came, so I pushed the door open and went in. The place was still and empty, except for the boy, who lay asleep on the bed where we had put him the night before. So I sat down and waited, partly for him to wake, but mostly in hopes that Phœbe would come in—she couldn't have gone far and left him like that.

As I waited I looked round. It was a poor place—even plainer by daylight than it had been the night before. The ceiling was low and the floor was bad; the walls and windows were dirty, and the fireplace was only an open hearth under an open chimney. There wasn't much

furniture, and what there was looked muddily and untidy.

Mrs. Ellis was right. Phoebe wasn't a handy lass about a house; yet she might take to tidy ways if she saw the need of them.

After awhile the lad opened his eyes and stretched up his arms.

"Phoebe," he called, "Phoebe, I want sommat to drink."

"Phoebe ain't about, my lad," I said; "but I'll get you something. I'm come to look at your bandages."

Then he began to whimper.

"Let me alone. I don't want you. I want Phoebe."

I was just going to tell him again that Phoebe was not there when, all of a sudden, she opened the door of the back place and came in.

"I've come to look at his leg," I began, feeling very shy when I saw her. "You didn't hear me come in, perhaps."

"Yes, I did," she said. "I saw you come through the gate."

"You might have come to say a word," I said.

"I had nothing I wanted to say," she answered, looking me straight in the face.

"Phoebe," I said, bringing my courage to the point, "what's come on your father isn't my fault. If I'd any ill-feeling against him, should I come here to help you? Let's be friends, Phoebe."

"The chicken doesn't make friends with the hawk, Evan Barry; and, as to me, I want no new friends."

She looked as proud and independent, as she said this, as if I was the dirt under her feet. Yet, when she took some water to the boy, her face was as tender and her voice as soft as could be. Ah! there's no accounting for the tricks a man's heart will play him. Instead of feeling angry that she snubbed me so, my only longing was for her to speak to me and look at me as she did at her little brother. Then I saw to his bandages, and when I had put them to rights, I lingered a bit, not because I thought I should gain anything by it, but because I couldn't make up my mind to go.

"You'll let me come again, Phoebe," I said at last.

"I'll have to let you come, it seems, whether I like it or not. Jim Meers is huffed. I seen him this morning, and he won't touch Arty's leg because he wasn't sent for last night."

"But you needn't ha' gone to him at all," I cried. "I told you I'd manage it."

"I know you did," she gave back; "but I'd sooner have had Jim."

Then she went and sat down by the bed and turned her face from me.

"Good afternoon, Phoebe," I said, after a few minutes' silence, and then I went out of the house.

"What a fool you are, Evan Barry," I said to myself, as I lifted the rickety wicket back to its place. "You're as big a fool as walks the earth."

When a man is much by himself he gets into the way of putting his thoughts into words; which I did just then.

"That's saying a good deal for yourself, Evan Barry," said some one close behind me; and when I turned sharp round I found myself face to face with old Peg Pennithorne.

It isn't easy to say who Peg Pennithorne was, nor where she came from. By times she lived in a yellow van drawn up opposite Lister's cottage on the heath, while her blind, white pony with his legs hobbled, made the most of what grazing he could find. Other times the pony was harnessed to the van, and Peg walked at his head along the forest roads to any fair or village feast that might be within five-and-twenty miles. She made a show of getting her living by plaiting baskets; but her chief stock-in-trade was fortune-telling. She'd more than once offered to read my hand; but I believed no more in her than I did in George Lister's evil eye, and I left both to them as did. She was a queer, old thing to look at, small and thin, with skin as brown and wrinkled as my old gaiters, and black eyes which pierced you as sharp as needles.

"Good day to you, Peg," I said, walking on.

"You're in a hurry, seemingly," she went on, "but if you are I can keep up with you till I've said what I want to. First of all, you're quite of my way of thinking."

"That shows your sense, mother," I answered, not knowing, however, what she was driving at.

"It may show mine; but it doesn't say much for yours. Now listen to a bit of good advice. There's a pretty girl, and a good girl, a girl I should be sorry to see unhappy, waiting for you not so very far off. You'd better be looking after her than spending your time as you've spent this last hour. Now don't tell me to mind my own business. Other people's business is mine. You'll get no good by hankering after Phoebe Lister."

"Who said I was hankering after her," I said, laughing; "and if I was, what is there against the girl?"

"I say nought against her; but I know more than I say. If you choose your luck well you'll go on with your courting at the keeper's lodge, and let Phoebe alone."

"Thankye, Peg," I said; "but I am not so sure there is any courting at the keeper's lodge to go on with or leave off."

"My lad," said Peg, shaking her head, "you called yourself a fool; if your eyes are wide enough open to see your own folly, why try to shut them when I show you wisdom? Now I'll bid you good afternoon, and you can think over what I've said."

And I did think it over; but there was something within me which was too strong to be changed by thinking, and those who have loved a girl at first sight, and all for herself, will know what I mean when I say so.

After that, every day as regular as possible, I went to look after young Arty, and little by little the child got to look for my coming, for I always brought him something in my pocket by way of lollipops, or a plaything, and I was as gentle with him as Phoebe herself, in hopes of winning my way with her. But she was always the same. What I brought the boy, she would fain not have let him take; but he was as wilful as she was, and wouldn't give up what he had rather keep. Now and then when I stayed on telling him this or that to pass the time away for him, she'd sit down and seem to listen too; but if I spoke to her she only gave me short answers, and sometimes she would say she had been thinking of other things so that she did not know what I had been talking of. Altogether I didn't make any way with her; and every day as I went out through the broken wicket I called myself a fool anew. But though I knew so well I was a fool, I clung to my folly, and as each new day came round I worked myself up to believe that if I kept on steady, and showed that I wasn't to be put off, she would come round at last. All this time I went but little to Ellis's, and when John persuaded me to go and smoke a pipe with him, I looked so gloomy and awkward that Mrs. Ellis would ask me what ailed me, and Grace's gentle eyes would have a sort of reproach in them, that stung me all the more, the more I tried to convince myself that I had done nothing to deserve it.

Arty Lister's leg took a longish while

to get right again; and much as I pitied the poor lad, remembering how I should have pined at his age, yet I couldn't help feeling a little sorry when I saw that soon I should have no excuse for going to see Phoebe. It was the beginning of November when I took the splints off for good.

"There, Arty," I said, "you won't want me much more; you can do without me altogether if you like."

"Shan't you never come any more, then?" he asked, looking rather doleful. Most likely he was thinking that toffy would be scarcer for the future.

"I'd rather come than not," I said, looking at Phoebe; "but if——"

Then I stopped. Why should I be the first to say she did not want me?

"There's no need for 'ifs,'" she said. "You'd better stick to your own sort. We ain't your sort."

"Phoebe," I cried, "don't say that! There need be no difference between us, if you didn't stick to making one."

"It doesn't matter whose making it is, Evan Barry, the difference is there."

"Phoebe," I began again, "don't be so hard with me. It isn't your nature. I'd do anything to please you; and you never so much as give me a kind word."

"Don't put yourself about to please me," she said; "those that please me needn't give themselves any trouble about it. Not that I'm so easy to please; but because——"

"I understand you, Phoebe," I broke in, with a sinking at my heart.

So I did understand her. Hadn't my love gone out to her without any asking or seeking on her part; and if she had been going to love me, could she have stuck to the grudge she had against me?

"And yet, Phoebe," I went on, "I hope we shall be good friends yet some day."

She said nothing.

"Phoebe," said the lad, "I like Evan, if you don't. He isn't a bad chap, though he is a keeper."

Before she answered—if she meant answering at all—the door opened sharply, and there stood old Peg Pennithorne. Phoebe's face lighted up at the sight of her.

"Well, Peggy," she said, eagerly.

But Peg's first words were not for her.

"Heyday, Evan Barry," she said, taking no notice of Phoebe; "so you haven't taken my advice? I thought you wouldn't. Well, gang your own gait, man, though,

mark you, it's not always pleasant to bear what we've brought on ourselves." Then, turning to Phoebe, she went on: "Yes, lass, I've done your errand; but whether you'll like the news I bring is another matter. It's no secret, so you may just as well hear it now. We all know, my lass, that a hot fire won't last long without plenty of fuel. Moreover, for some men one pretty face is as good as another: besides which, money-bags are better than rags and tatters. If you want to know any more, you only need wait till him you are thinking of comes home, which'll be soon, for a man can't bide in Stockbridge parish when his banns are going to be called at Bewley."

While she spoke, the colour had died out of Phoebe's face.

"Peggy!" she cried, in a pitiful tone; but Peg was half-way down the garden. Then she threw herself down on the floor, with her head against a chair.

She had forgotten all about me. For a minute or two I stood looking at her, without daring to say a word. I knew it was of Harry Meyrick that Peg had brought her word; that he had cast her off for some one else.

That was what she might have expected; and I longed to tell her that, if she'd give me a chance, I'd never love her less, let alone play her false. But it was no use speaking then; I should have to wait—how long, I couldn't guess; but I felt as if she must come to me at last, just because I loved her so much.

It was the first week in December when Harry Meyrick came back to Bewley. I was standing talking to Mr. Lamb, the miller, one afternoon, as he rode over the bridge from the village, looking as burly and well-pleased with himself as if he'd never done aught to be ashamed of.

"Hallo, Harry," called out Mr. Lamb; "what's this news that's come over from Stockbridge? When shall we drink the bride's health?" At which Meyrick grinned, and made a cut at him with his riding-whip. "They say," went on the miller, as we stood looking after him, "that he'll be asked in church next Sunday. Lord, who'd have thought last spring, when his father was in such a way about him and that gipsy lass, that he'd have steadied down so soon?"

"The gipsy lass, as you call her, is well rid of such a worthless chap," was my answer; and then I whistled my dog and

went my way, past Bewley Water, and up the hill on to the heath.

I hadn't spoken to Phoebe since the day Mother Pennithorne had told her about Meyrick's marriage; but most days I had found a good or a bad reason for walking along the heath in the hopes of seeing her. And though every day I had been disappointed, I hadn't lost heart; perhaps I had rather gained courage, seeing it was now more than four weeks since she had spoken a cold word to me.

"Surely," I said to myself, "when she sees that I am still of the same mind, and that Harry Meyrick has jilted her, she'll come round."

At the white gate I came across young Arty, playing tip-cat by himself.

"Hullo, Evan," he called out, "where are you off to?"

"I'm going to look at a hole or two in the fence?" I said; "will you come along with me?"

"I cannot," he said, shaking his head; "I've got an errand for Phoebe."

"Well, then, you'd best be quick. It'll be dark long before you get to the village at that rate."

"I ain't going to the village, and I ain't in no hurry. The last time I went erranding for her, old Meyrick got a stick to me, and I had to run away."

"You ain't carrying a message from Phoebe to Harry Meyrick?" I said, catching hold of him.

"I didn't say what I was carrying," he said, slipping out of my hold; "'tain't worth while guessing. Phoebe told me not to tell."

With that he picked up his tip cat, and scurried down the lane.

So she hankered after him still. Well, then, she'll have no thought for me yet. It was almost too much to bear in patience, and yet I put it down to her credit. She had begun to love the man, and she couldn't leave off. Ah, if it had only been me, how sure I should have been of her!

With my thoughts working thus, I walked slowly along the heath, wondering when I should see her again, and how she'd treat me. The way I chose took me close past their gate, and that day, for the first time in all those weeks, there she was, standing against it, shading her eyes with her hand, and looking up towards the road.

My heart gave such a jump when I saw her, that I almost cried out; but all I said, as I pulled up in front of her, was:



"Good afternoon, Phoebe; it's a bitter cold day, ain't it?"

She started, as if I had come on her unawares.

"Have you, by chance, seen our Arty?" she asked, anxious like.

"Yes, I saw him five minutes ago, by the white gate."

"By the gate; then he'll be here directly."

"I don't know that," I said; "he wasn't coming this way when I saw him. You'd best not get in a fidget about him."

"Who said I was in a fidget?" she asked, sharply.

She looked at me as she spoke, and I saw that her eyes were red with crying. The sight of her pining like that was too much for me, after I'd seen Meyrick so gay and unconcerned. I'd never meant to tell her I cared for her more than she might have guessed, but now the words came out almost against my will.

"Phoebe," I began, going up close to her, and trying to take her hands, "Phoebe, my dear, you don't know how true and good I'd be to you if I only had the chance. I've loved you ever since the first minute I saw you, and I shall never love any one else so much. I feel sometimes as if my heart would burst with the love I have for you, and with the thought that you are fretting for a man as doesn't care any more for you."

I'd better not have spoken at all; far better have said nothing than have finished with them last words.

"What do you mean?" she said, drawing away from me. "Who told you I was fretting? What do you know about them as care for me or them as don't?"

"I know one as cares for you," I began again—more fool I—"I know one man who'd go through fire and water to serve you. Oh, my dear, if you'd only let me, how happy I'd make you."

Then she looked me full in the face, and gave a little laugh.

"You've a fine conceit of yourself, Evan Barry," she said, "to think you could make me happy. Myself, I'm of another way of thinking; and, what's more, if I were to live a hundred years, I should never change my mind."

Then, without another word, she turned away and went up the garden into the house. As I saw her go, my head reeled as if I had been struck. So I had spoken at last, and she had answered; and I

knew she would stick to what she had said. Good Heaven! was I to go on living, day after day, till the weeks grew into years, and till the years made an old man of me, without ever hearing a tender word from the woman I would have died for? I couldn't believe it. All that day and the next I went about as if in a dream, thinking that, sure enough, something must happen to lighten the load on my heart. As I was going home to supper I met old Peggy.

"Good evening, Evan," she said; "you're just the man I want."

"Well," I said, stopping short, "what is it?"

"You look glum, my lad," she said. "Well, I don't wonder at it; but of that I'll say nought. I've come to tell you that you'd better not be down by the Old Wharf at eight o'clock to-night; and I hope you'll bear my warning in mind."

"And why not?" I asked, wondering whatever mystification old Peg was up to now.

"Why not?" she said, laughing, "because you aren't wanted. Gamekeepers are in the way sometimes."

"Is it poachers?" I asked. It was by the wharf we had caught George Lister.

"Never you mind," she answered, grinning again. "I'll tell no tales; only take note of this: you'd better not be at the Wharf at eight o'clock to-night."

Then she turned round and walked off.

Now, what was more natural, after hearing that, than for me to eat my supper as quick as possible and get down to the wharf by twenty minutes to eight? The way there was a rough cart-track through the copse by Bewley Water. His lordship had had the wharf made there for the convenience of bringing coals and other heavy things to the Manor House by water; but no one lived there, and in winter there was but little traffic coming up and down.

When I reached the opening in the wood where the landing was, I stood still; there was not a sound to be heard but the swish-swish of the rising tide against a couple of old boats that lay there. The black water lay before me, the black night all round me, and behind, the road looked like a black cavern running back between the trees.

"It's a hoax of old Peggy's, I don't doubt," I thought to myself; "but I'll wait a quarter of an hour."

With that I got under the shadow of a

pile of cord wood, and whistled my dog to come and lie down close by me. There I waited; but the minutes seemed almost like hours in the cold and darkness. I'd almost made up my mind to go away, when I heard the church clock strike eight, and at that moment a quick step came down the road.

Who was it? Was this a dodge of Peg Pennithorne's to put me on the track of some misdoing about the game? Or what could it be?

I gave my dog a sign to keep quiet, and then all was still again. Whoever it was that had come—and that I couldn't see, so dark it was—seemed to be waiting, just as I was, for some one who was in no hurry to come. It was very cold, and the waiting lasted so long that my feet and hands were numbed and stiff. At last, after half an hour, perhaps, I heard other footsteps in the distance, coming nearer and nearer, till they, too, stopped, and some one not more than a couple of yards from my hiding-place gave a low whistle. My dog started, but I hushed him again, in time to hear another signal given.

"Ah, you are there, then," said the one nearer to me, and I recognised the voice with a start for that of Harry Meyrick. "What a beastly dark night it is."

I knew whose voice would answer; yet, until I had heard it, I couldn't bring myself to believe that Phoebe had been standing there close to me all that while, waiting for the man who had played with her love and cast her off.

"Yes," she said, "I'm here; I've been here this long time. I thought you never were coming."

"I thought so myself," he answered; "it isn't a night to send a dog out."

Now I suppose what I ought to have done was to come out of my hiding-place and let them know I heard them; but I didn't do it, and the honest truth is that no such thought crossed my mind. I wanted to hear what he'd say for himself, and whether she really cared for him so greatly after all.

"Yes," she said, "it's a hard night. Why didn't you come to our cottage, where you could ha' sat by a bit of fire, instead of fixing on such a place as this?"

"Why did you bother me to meet you at all?" he answered, roughly. "I told you I wouldn't come to your house any more. It won't do now; but as you would see me at any price, I fixed on this place

as the quietest and furthest out of the way I could think of."

"You needn't be ashamed of folks seeing us," she said. "You said once you never would be."

"That's an old story, my girl," he interrupted; "I'm older and wiser since then, and the sooner you leave off bothering me the better for all of us. I've come to you this once; but, I warn you, all the messages you can send me won't stir me again."

"Very well, Harry," she said, and her voice sounded as if she were crying, "I won't bother you any more. Time was when I used to tell you not to bother me; but if you've forgotten all about it, I can forget, too—I can forget all the promises you made me, and all the kisses you gave me; but I shouldn't have thought that you could have cast off your word so easy, and have asked another woman to marry you, while you knew—"

"Come, come, Phoebe," he broke in, a little roughly, "that is all high falutin'. We talked a lot of nonsense a while back; but that's over, I tell you, and we can't begin again. A pretty girl like you can easily find a new sweetheart. They say Barry, the keeper, is always after you—" He paused; and I wondered what she'd say. But she said nothing; and he went on: "You've plenty of head on your shoulders, Phoebe, you ought to understand. And now I can't stay any longer; I'm busy just now; so give me a kiss for old times' sake, and I'll be off."

"Be off as fast as you like!" she answered, proudly; "but you'll get no more kisses from me."

"Just as you like," he said. "Good night."

She did not speak, but I fancied I could hear her breath coming quick, as if she was sobbing. He seemed to hesitate for a moment, then he said good night again, and I heard his steps along the road.

Only then did it cross my mind that if she knew how I'd been spying on her she'd have the right to hate me worse than before; yet as an honest man I felt I ought to tell her I had been there, and I had better tell her at once before she went away. It was a bad moment to go through—what with pity for her, and anger for him, and shame for myself, I hardly knew how to find words for what I had to say, and all the time she stood where he had left her sobbing aloud now that she thought she was alone. At last I made a move.

"Phoebe," I said, and my voice sounded hoarse and strange in my ears. She turned quickly round.

"Who's there?" she said. "Who called me?"

"I called you, Phoebe," I answered, coming forward. "I've been here this long time; I've heard all you said. I didn't know you were coming here. I didn't mean to spy on you, and what I've heard shall be as if I hadn't heard it, only I thought I'd let you know."

"It doesn't matter," she spoke in a dull, crushed voice, "I don't care who heard or who knows. Go away and leave me alone."

"Nay, Phoebe," I began; "won't you come along with me, and I'll see you home?"

"I'm not going home your way, and I'll go my own way alone."

I stood for a moment or two, then I began again:

"It's a bitter night, Phoebe; you'd better by far be thinking of moving. I can't bear to go and leave you here."

"Evan Barry," she said in a softer voice than she had ever used to me before, "you told me yesterday that you'd do anything to make me happy. Now if you spoke true, you'll go away and leave me to my own thoughts—they aren't pleasant, but I want to think them out alone."

"Very well, Phoebe, if doing as you ask me will show you the truth of my words, I'll go; but it goes to my heart to leave you here. Good night."

"Good night, Evan," she said, and it sounded almost friendly.

Then I turned and went slowly up the wood, listening if she followed; but when I reached the gate I had not heard her move. So I opened it wide and let it bang hard, as much as to say I was clear of the place; but instead of going further I stood there and waited to see her come by. It could do her no harm, I said to myself, for me to watch for her. And as I stood leaning against the gate, I thought over all that had passed since the evening when first I saw her. It was hard to believe that was only a few weeks back. Why, it seemed years since I used to go whistling up the wood to see Grace Ellis. Poor Grace, I hoped she hadn't cared much about me; but if she had it was past my power to mend matters. She was a better woman than Phoebe Lister, and there were twenty good reasons for liking her; but, nevertheless, it was Phoebe I loved and

not Grace. What would come of it all, I wondered over and over again.

Suddenly, the far-off striking of the church clock reminded me that I had been standing there a long while. I counted eight, nine, ten, and Phoebe had not come yet. I would go back and try to persuade her once again. It was sheer folly her staying there. I went cautiously, for I did not want to scare her. When I got back to the wharf I could see no one.

"Phoebe," I called gently, "Phoebe, I've come to fetch you home." There was no answer, however, and I could not be sure whether or no I saw her a little further on under the trees. "Phoebe," I called again, "is that you? speak if it is."

But it was not Phoebe; it was a pile of stakes against a tree. How could she have got away so quietly that I had heard nothing? I felt at my wit's end. Suddenly I was aware of Bob, my dog, snuffing about uneasily along the water-side. Then in he went.

"What is it, Bob?" I cried, and a fearful misgiving came over me. "Good dog; what is it?" Then I followed him to the water-side, and stooped down to see what he had got. That was where and how I found Phoebe. She must have lain down quietly in the shallow water beside the bank and let the rising tide carry away the life she was weary of.

There was a terrible talk in Bewley about her death, particularly when it came out at the inquest that Harry Meyrick had met her on the wharf an hour before she drowned herself. The Meyricks hushed the matter up as best they could; and Harry must have made the best of his tale to the brewer's daughter, for she married him, after all, in the Christmas week.

As for me, I had had enough of Bewley, and, as soon as I could, I turned my back on it. I heard afterwards that the Ellises spoke of me as a young scamp, who had behaved very badly to their Grace. Nevertheless, Grace married in course of time, and I hope she is happy; while, as for me, since the day I first saw Phoebe Lister I have never cared for any other woman.

I don't know how or when the story of his daughter's death reached George Lister, nor whether he grieved much over it. But of this I am sure—that if he could have known my share of the story, he would have felt that his words to me, as they took him away to prison, had been fulfilled to the very utmost.

### "THE GLORIOUS VINTAGE OF CHAMPAGNE."

ACCORDING to the whimsical German legend, champagne was invented, or created, by "one hundred thousand devils," who, while Beelzebub was absent on particular business, went off on a frolic of their own. The sudden return of the chief threw them into alarm, and they fled into the cellar of a rich baron, where they found innumerable bottles of wine, into which they hurriedly entered. The master, in a rage, followed them, and, for punishment, corked them up in the bottles in which they had taken refuge. And this is why champagne sparkles with fiendish brilliancy.

According to sober history, however, champagne was discovered by a certain Dom Perignon, on whom, in the year 1688, was conferred the post of cellarer to the monks of Saint Benedict, who cultivated the vine-lands round the Abbey of Hautvillers, near Epernay, in the valley of the Marne. Dom Perignon was born with a discriminating palate and a genius for adaptation. He found the wine of the district to be of very varying quality, and he conceived the notion of "marrying" the vintages. He discovered not only that one kind of soil imparts fragrance and another body to the juice of the grapes grown on it, but also that white wine can be made from black grapes and will keep better than white wine made from white grapes.

It is not generally known that champagne is principally made from red grapes, to the extent perhaps of from three-fourths to four-fifths. If it was allowed to ferment with the skins the result would be red wine, except in the case of Sillery, Cremant, and Choilly, which are made from white grapes. That colour in champagne known as *cœl de perdrix*, and usually associated with good vintages, is the consequence of a large proportion of the grapes being full-ripe when gathered, when the fruit is slightly tinted with the colour of the skin. The famous vintage of 1874 had this characteristic.

Dom Perignon is further to be credited with the invention of corks, at least as applied to wines, for previous to his day, the bottles of Epernay wine were stopped with a plug of flax steeped in oil—a practice still followed in Italy. The white wine of Champagne became famous under the new

cellarer, who was ever meditating new devices in his well-stocked vaults; but it was well on to the close of the seventeenth century before he made his brilliant discovery. Louis the Fourteenth found new life in quaffing the creamy foam, and the supper-parties of the gay days of the Regency acquired fresh gaiety under its inspiring influence. The Marquis de Sillery has immortalised one of these suppers at which he first introduced the wine grown on his paternal acres, and now bearing his name. He caused the bottles to be wreathed in flowers, and to be introduced to his guests on a given signal by a bevy of damsels attired as Bacchantes. Henceforward no supper-party was complete without the new sparkling beverage.

Yet men did not know why it foamed and why it sparkled. Because of the mystery there by-and-by came a reaction against champagne, whose peculiar character was alleged to be due to the use of noxious drugs. But Dom Perignon lived until 1715, calmly improving and elaborating his process, and although he died two hundred and seventy-five years ago, his works have followed him without intermission. Sancho Panza invoked blessings on the man who invented sleep, but there are hundreds of thousands of men and women who have cause to bless the name—if they only knew it—of him who invented champagne. And, doubtless, there are more who have had cause to curse it.

There seems to be a sort of periodicity of vintages. A good one occurs once in an average number of years, which average varies with the wine. Thus in port and sherry, and some other fine wines, there are shorter intervals between the good vintages than in champagne and hock.

There are two peculiarities about champagne—drinking which are capable of explanation. The one is the rapidity with which the wine exhilarates, notwithstanding the small proportion of alcohol it contains. This is due to the carbonic acid-gas evolved, which is inhaled while drinking, for it is the property of this gas to expedite the action of anything with which it is associated. It is estimated that one glass of champagne is equal in effect to two glasses of still wine of the same strength, and is more rapid in action. The other peculiarity is the sort of lethargy or deadness which follows after excessive champagne drinking. This is analogous to the stupor produced by



carbonic acid-gas; but it is assisted and intensified by the excess of sugar deranging the stomach. The undigested sugar turns into acid, and thus it is that too much champagne is apt to produce dyspepsia.

Herein we find both the blessing and the bane of this popular liquor.

Sweetness is often confused with richness in wines; but, as a matter of fact, sweetness is often produced by the addition of sugar, especially in champagnes. It has been compared to charity in that it covers a multitude of sins. The richness proceeding from natural saccharine is produced by a natural arrest of the process of fermentation, leaving an excess of saccharine in the liquor. It occurs mostly in the hot climates, but in port-making a richness is produced by the artificial arrest of fermentation. As a medicine, however, champagne is best "dry," and its tendency then is to thin the blood.

It is said that sugar-of-lead is sometimes added to low-class champagnes. Whether this be so or not the present writer is unable to say; but the reader can always avoid the risk by eschewing low-class wines. There is, however, a simple test by which he can ascertain the presence of the poisonous ingredient. Heat the wine with a little chlorate of potash and hydrochloric acid; then, when the chlorine and colouring matter have been driven off, put the remaining liquid into sulphurated hydrogen. If there is any sugar-of-lead present, it will be immediately precipitated to the bottom of the vessel in the form of sulphide.

The principal reason why champagne is only made in the districts of France now sacred to it, is because of the caves which admit of the indispensable uniformity and lowness of temperature. Such caves can be built anywhere, perhaps; but the expense would be prohibitive. In the champagne country the soil-surface is chalk to a considerable depth, which is easily and cheaply excavated. Thus any amount of cellarage can be obtained by digging. As a rule the cellars range in depth from thirty to forty feet.

The most interesting and comprehensive account of the champagne country and of champagne making is that given by Mr. Henry Vizetelly in his little book of "Facts About Champagne," to which we have to express much indebtedness in preparing this article.

After the death of Dom Perignon, the making of champagne grew sparse, as also

did its popularity, after a temporary reaction, increase with astonishing rapidity. But champagne-making is an industry requiring incessant labour, patient skill, minute precaution, and careful observation. Much depends on the selection of the natural wine to be treated, for, as Dom Perignon discovered, the soil lends its flavour to the grape. Thus the wine of the district of Ay has a flavour of peaches, that of Avenay one of strawberries, that of Hautvillers one of nuts, that of Pierry a peculiar taste known as the *pierre à fusil*, due to the abundance of flints, and so on. The grapes of special vineyards are always used to mask and characterise that of other vineyards, so as to preserve the various standards of the different brands.

The entire area of the champagne country is about thirty-five thousand acres, planted with about four hundred millions of vines, valued by the Taxation Department of the Ministry of Finance at nearly five millions sterling—four million nine hundred and sixty thousand pounds.

During the vintage season are to be witnessed some of those curious scenes which Mr. Vizetelly has described. The vintagers come from long distances every year, and are for the most part engaged before they leave their own villages. The others find accommodation somewhere in the neighbourhood of the vineyards, and at day-break they attend, on beat of drum, in the local market-place, where the rate is fixed for the day's labour. That rate, of course, varies from week to week and year to year; it may be as low as a franc and a half a day with food, or as high—as in 1889—as three or four francs. As a rule, they have no difficulty in finding employment; and the whole countryside is alive from the moment when the town-drummer begins his tattoo—about three o'clock in the morning.

For it is asserted that grapes gathered at sunrise produce the lightest and clearest wine, and also yield more juice than when plucked later in the day. Moreover, in the heat of the day it is very difficult, and often impossible, to prevent some fermentation which gives a colour to the must not desired in high-class wines. If the grapes have to be carried any distance in baskets under a hot sun, a large proportion of them become unfit for champagne-making.

At vintage-time, we are told by Mr. Vizetelly, from sunrise to sunset, everywhere is bustle and excitement. In these ordinarily quiet little villages there is a

perpetual pattering of sabots, and a rattling and bumping of wheels over the roughly-paved streets. The majority of the inhabitants are afoot; the feeble feminine half, basket on arm, thread their way with the juveniles through the rows of vines planted half-way up the mountain; while the sturdy masculine portion are mostly passing to and fro between the press-house and the wine-shops. Carts piled up with baskets, or crowded with peasants from a distance on their way to the vineyards, jostle the low railway-trucks, laden with brand-new casks, and the somewhat rickety cabriolets of the agents of the big champagne houses, who are reduced to clinch their final bargain for a hundred or more pieces of wine beside the reeking wine-press. Dotting all the steep slopes, like a swarm of huge ants, are a crowd of men, women, and children; the men, in blue blouses, or stripped to their shirt-sleeves, being for the most part engaged in carrying the baskets of grapes to and fro, and loading the carts; whilst the women, in closely-fitting, neat white caps, or wearing old-fashioned unbleached sun-bonnets of the contemned coal-scuttle type, resembling the sun-bonnet of the Midland Counties, together with the children, are intent on stripping the vines of their fruit.

The vine-gathering has to be most carefully conducted and rigorously superintended, for no damaged or unripe fruit ought to find its way into the baskets. After these reach the "pressoir" they are again minutely examined by a set of men and women appointed for the purpose, whose duty is to detach all bruised or inferior berries, prune away the stalks, etc. The work of the sorters is most important, for a single rotten grape will infect and deteriorate the whole contents of the press.

This press is, for the most part, like the ordinary cider-press; but on some of the large vineyards it is worked by a large fly-wheel. On the floor of the press the grapes are spread in a compact mass, and are usually first trodden by a couple of men with their bare feet. Out of four thousand kilogrammes of grapes—the usual contents of a press—this physical pressure should produce about two hundred and twenty gallons of must; then the mechanical pressure is applied, and about an equal quantity should result, producing a total cuvée of about four hundred and forty gallons. This is allowed to flow into prepared reservoirs, and is thence pumped

through silver-lined or gutta-percha tubes into the vats, where it is allowed to clear for eight or ten hours. The mucous matter floats to the surface in a kind of froth, and when this appears, the liquor is quickly drawn off into new and perfectly clean casks. Meanwhile, the grapes in the presses are subjected to further repeated pressures; but all the juice after the third squeeze is reserved as a beverage for the workers and for local consumption.

The cultivation of the grape in the champagne country is in the hands of the small vine-farmers—although a few of the large makers have also vineyards of their own. The small farmer does not, as a rule, crush his grapes, but sells them to certain middle-men who have presses, or else to the agents of the large champagne makers. The rule is for the small cultivator to sell his crop at an overhead rate per caque of sixty kilogrammes—one hundred and thirty-two pounds. Seven caques of grapes ought to yield a hogshead—forty-four gallons—of new wine, and the average price of the fruit is stated at about threepence-halfpenny per pound. In some years, as in 1889, it is higher; but it is often the case that when the crop is small the quality is superior. A "piece" of new wine usually runs about five hundred francs the hogshead of forty-four gallons. In 1889, however, the price ran up to a thousand francs, and for the specially-prized wine of Ay, as much as from one thousand three hundred to one thousand five hundred francs was paid by the large manufacturers. No wonder champagne is dear, when the raw material costs so much, before ever the maker begins his difficult and delicate task!

For the special characteristic of champagne is, as has been well said, that its manufacture only commences where that of other wines ordinarily ends. After the wine has been drawn off, as above described, it is left in the casks at the presses until the beginning of the following year. Then it is carted into Reims, Epernay, Ay, Pierry, Avize, etc., where are the establishments of the manufacturers and owners of "brands." There the casks are filled up and tightly bunged, and kept until ready for mixing according to the principle of the particular manufacturers, each of whom has his own method of producing the flavour and quality of his own brand. If the vintage has been an inferior one, a certain proportion of old superior wine—reserved for the purpose—is blended.

The mixing takes place in large vats, holding ten or twelve thousand gallons, and fitted with fans, which are worked to effect a complete amalgamation. The result of the mixture is what is called a *cuvée*, and in making it, it is usual to temper the wine expressed from black grapes by adding about a fifth part from white grapes. The mixing of the crude wines, so as to produce in the finished champagne the special flavour and bouquet desired, constitutes the art of the champagne-maker.

He has also to consider the effervescence, which depends on the quantity of carbonic acid-gas the wine contains, which, in turn, depends on the amount of natural saccharine. If there is too much gas it will burst the bottles, and waste the liquor; if there is too little, the wine will not sparkle. The right proportion is ascertained by means of a glucometer, which registers the amount of saccharine in the *cuvée*, and indicates to the watchful maker whether sugar-candy must be added, or fermentation prolonged to get rid of the superfluous saccharine.

When all this is done, the *cuvée* is drawn off into casks again, and is fined with isinglass, and slightly dosed with liquid tannin to make up for the loss of natural tannin during fermentation. At the end of a month the liquor ought to be perfectly clear and ready for bottling; if not, it has to be racked off the lees and refined.

Only new, perfectly sound, and very strong bottles are used, and these are all carefully tested by an experienced hand before being filled. Yet even with the greatest precautions, the loss by explosion in the cellars of the makers is enormous.

This is the method of bottling, or *tirage*: The wine, after a preliminary test as to its fitness for bottling, is emptied from the casks into vats or tuns of varying capacity, whence it flows through pipes into oblong reservoirs, each provided with a row of syphon-taps, on to which the bottles are slipped, and from which the wine ceases to flow directly the bottles become filled. Men or lads remove the full bottles, replacing them with empty ones, while other hands convey them to the corkers, whose guillotine-machines are incessantly in motion. Speed in the process is of much importance, as during a single day the wine may undergo a notable change. From the corkers, the bottles are passed on to the *agrafeurs*, who

secure the cork by means of an iron clip called an *agrafe*; and the bottles are afterwards conveyed to a spacious room above-ground, known as the *cellier*, or to a cool vault underground, according to the number of "atmospheres" the wine may indicate. This may be two, or four, or more, since air compressed to half its volume acquires twice its ordinary force; and if to a quarter of its volume, quadruple this force. A manometer, or pressure gauge, is used to ascertain the exact degree of pressure. A "grand mousseux" wine shows a pressure of five-and-three-quarter "atmospheres," and is at once conveyed to the subterranean vaults as certain to develop the proper sparkling. If the pressure only indicates four "atmospheres," or less, the wine must be kept in the *cellier* above-ground until it has developed further. Sometimes charcoal fires have to be lighted in the cellars to encourage the effervescence.

The bottles are now stacked in rows, and in about three weeks the explosions begin, as the gas-making proceeds. The bursting of bottles varies from two-and-a-half to about eight per cent.; but sometimes the wine surprises the maker. Not many years ago one large firm lost by explosion one hundred and twenty thousand out of two hundred thousand bottles in their cellars.

By the month of October, the breakage should be about over, and then the surviving bottles are restacked horizontally and left for about eighteen months or so. Some makers leave them for two or three years before going to the final process.

When this approaches, the bottles are altered to a slanting position, with the necks downwards; the position being altered from time to time until the slant becomes abrupt. This is to cause the sediment, which forms in the bottle after fermentation, to leave the side of the bottle for the neck. There, by a series of dexterous twists, it is gradually brought to near the cork, when the latter is smartly withdrawn, the sediment expelled, and a new cork inserted, with the loss of only a small percentage of liquor. Only a clever and a thoroughly practised hand can perform this feat, and can tell the exact amount of twist and slope to give daily to the bottles. Some men pass their lives in doing nothing else, and have been known to shake and replace in exact position as many as fifty thousand bottles a day.

The wine is now all in the chalky sub-

terranean cellars described at the outset, and there is completed the process of transforming it from "Vin brut" into the champagne of commerce and social fêtes. The operator who removes the sediment so dexterously passes on the bottle, with a temporary cork, to the doseur, who slips in the exact amount of liqueur, or syrup, prescribed for the particular brand or quality of the wine. Each manufacturer has his own recipe, and the syrups vary very much according to the quality of the wine and the market for which it is intended. In general, however, the "dose" of liqueur is very old wine of the very highest quality, to which has been added a little sugar-candy and a dash of cognac. The "dry" champagnes require a smaller "dose" than the sweet wines so popular in France and Russia; and for that reason, perhaps, the champagnes made for the English market are more wholesome than those prepared to meet the Continental taste.

The exact amount of "dose" varies according to the sweetness and dryness of the wine which is being prepared, and is measured and administered by means of a little machine which, in the best establishments, is made of silver and glass. From the doseur the bottle passes to the égaliseur, who equalises the contents, namely, fills up with pure wine to the requisite level for corking; and if colour is needed to suit some markets, it is attained at this point by making an addition of red wine. The égaliseur then hands the bottle to the corker, who compresses the cork with a machine, drives it home by a suspended weight, and passes on the bottle to the ficeleur, whose duty is to round the top of the cork, and secure it with strings and wire.

After all this is done, another workman whirls the bottles about his head, one in each hand, to complete the amalgamation of the wine and liqueur, and then they are allowed to rest for some months. When ready for shipment, they are labelled, capped, and wrapped in tissue-paper by women, and then packed in cases or baskets for transmission abroad.

And so we may leave the "Glorious Vintage of Champagne," to make the tour of the world, with its exhilarating effervescence and enticing sparkle.

Who does not know it, and who, save a Blue-Ribbonite, does not in his secret soul love it—let us hope—in moderation? "The grim Berliner and the gay Viennese," as Mr. Vizetelly remarks, "both acknowledge the exhilarating influence of the wine. Champagne sparkles in crystal goblets in the great capital of the North, and the Moslem wipes its creamy froth from his beard beneath the very shadow of Saint Sophia; for the Prophet has only forbidden the use of wine, and of a surety—Allah be praised! this strangely sparkling, delicious liquor, which gives to the believer a foretaste of the joys of Paradise, cannot be wine. At the diamond-fields of South Africa, and the diggings of Australia, the brawny miner who has hit upon a big bit of crystallised carbon, or a nugget of virgin ore, strolls to the 'saloon' and shouts for champagne. The mild Hindu imbibes it quietly, but approvingly, as he watches the evolutions of the Nautch girls, and his partiality for it has enriched the Anglo-Bengalese vocabulary and London slang with the word 'Simkin.' It is transported on camel-backs across the deserts of Central Asia; and in frail canoes up the mighty Amazon. The two-sworded Daimio calls for it in the tea-gardens of Yokohama; and the New Yorker, when not rinsing his stomach by libations of iced-water, imbibes it freely at Delmonico's. Wherever the civilised man of the nineteenth century has set foot—at the base of the Pyramids, at the summit of the Cordilleras, in the mangrove swamps of Ashantee, and the gulches of the Great Lone Land, in the wilds of the Amoor, and on the desert isles of the Pacific—he has left traces of his presence in the heap of the empty bottles that were once filled with the sparkling vintage of the Champagne."

On the 28th of MARCH will be commenced a

## NEW SERIAL STORY,

BY

MARY ANGELA DICKENS,

AUTHOR OF

"A Mist of Error," "Her Inheritance," "A Social Success," "Kitty's Victim," etc., etc.

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